593 The conversation becomes animated and laughter spreads. In the dark
182 prairie the camp fires burn. Around the fire, the only protection
462 against the cold which descends, behind the frail windbreak of palms
[342] and branches hastily planted in the ground on the side where wind or
[415] rain is expected; near the baskets filled with poor objects which constitute their whole earthly treasure; lying on the ground which extends around, haunted only by other bands equally hostile and fearful, the couples, embracing tightly, are truly seen as the support of one another, the comfort, the only help against the daily difficulties and the dreamy melancholy invades the Nambikwara soul from time to time. The visitor who camps in the brush with the Indians for the first time feels tenderness as well as anguish and pity before the spectacle of this humanity so completely unprotected; crushed, apparently against the soil of a hostile land by some implacable cataclysm; naked, shivering around the hesitant fires. He circulates tip-toe among the underbrush, in the dark, avoiding crushing in his walk a hand, an arm, a trunk, whose warm reflections are seen by the light of the fires. But this misery is animated by whispering and laughter. [56] The couples clasp one another as in the nostalgia of a lost union. Their caresses, at the same time tender and candid, are not interrupted by the passage of the stranger. One senses in all
[157] of them an immense gentleness, a profound carelessness, a naive and charming animal satisfaction, and, emanating from all that, something like the most moving and credible expression of human tenderness.

593 Thus it is not surprising that the attitude of the two sexes as con-
831 cerns one another is characterized by intense interest. This interest
462 is translated in certain cases by the vocabulary. In fact the Nambikwara
562 have only one word to express "pretty" and "young," and a single word to
[517] signify "ugly" and "old" (munjene, jeʔene, bl). Their esthetic judgments are thus based essentially on human considerations, and above all, sexual ones. But the interest which is manifested between the sexes is of a complex nature. Men judge women in a mass, as being a little different from themselves. Depending on the situation, they consider them with desire, admiration, or tenderness. In itself the confusion of terms pointed out above constitutes permanent homage. But it must not be forgotten that the form of economic adaptation realized by sexual division of labor a capital role attributes to the women, since family life rests to a very large degree (probably the greatest) on the collecting of the women, but it represents an
[183] inferior type of activity. The ideal life is conceived on the model of agricultural production or hunting. To have plenty of manioc, and

[End Plate VII]

517
516
855
142
302
301

Family life: The woman a22 and her baby a23 in a state of ease (cf. p. 106 ff.).

756
593
301
142

The shaman of group c (C20) plays with one of his two wives (c21).